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Self-Ownership and Control Rights to Ability:

Is Suicide Justifiable on the Basis of the Principle of Self-Ownership?

Kazuhiro Watanabe

Introduction

As G. A. Cohen clearly showed with his ‘eyeball lottery example,’ we have undeniably strong intuitions that seem to support the principle of self-ownership (Cohen, 1995). One consequence of approving self-ownership is supposed to be an inequality among people since assuring equality by introducing some distributive policy such as taxation would violate one’s self-ownership (Nozick, 1974). Another concern with self-ownership is, among many other things, whether or not one can rightly dispose of her body and/or ability. If the principle of self-ownership is fully justified, should we be left free to injure ourselves and even commit suicide? Supporters of the principle of self-ownership, typically those in the right libertarian camp, insist that we have a right to commit suicide because it is implied by that principle (Szasz, 2004)⁽¹⁾. If these alleged consequences such as inequality and justified suicide do not sound good to you, it is reasonable to suspect that there would be something ‘fishy’ in claiming that our apparently strong intuition supports the principle of self-ownership as such. Indeed, our moral intuition itself, even strong in its force, does not tell us what kinds of rights we should exactly have on the basis of self-ownership. The aim of this paper is to clarify this point by examining the implications of our intuitions about self-ownership and the structure of our rights regarding ownership.

In the following, I will firstly set forth the problem of self-ownership and equality. Secondly, Christman’s distinction between control rights and income rights will be explained, which is supposed to show that the principle of self-ownership does not necessarily imply inequality. Thirdly, I will clarify what our intuition about self-ownership exactly suggests, by explaining and developing what Cohen was trying to say with his eyeball lottery example. It shall be claimed that, contrary to our initial expectation, our intuition does not primarily support the self-ownership of body but that of ability. Fourthly, by examining a plausible strategy for justifying control rights to our ability, I will argue that those control rights to ability cannot be fully justified in the sense that we are not entitled to terminate our own lives. The principle of self-ownership cannot serve the source of our right to commit suicide.

1. The Problem of Self-Ownership and Equality

In his *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality* (Cohen, 1995), Cohen presents the following thought experiment to suggest that we, even egalitarians, intuitively believe that we have self-ownership of our own body. Consider the society where eye transplant technology is well developed. You have two normal eyeballs and enjoy normal vision while there are some blind people who are forced to live challenging life due to their blindness. If you believe in equality, how come you leave the blinds with their unlucky situation? To eliminate this inequality, the state decides an eye donor by lot in order to give one of her eyeball to the blind. If you feel an intuitive aversion to this lottery, you are affirming the right over your own body. Then, if you affirm the principle of self-ownership of your own body, why not affirm the ownership of your property? Moreover, if you affirm the private ownership of property, you should accept an inequality because it is a natural consequence from the principle of self-ownership that you affirmed! Hence, the problem of self-ownership and equality is this: on the one hand, an intuitive force of the principle of self-ownership seems to be so powerful that even egalitarians cannot easily deny it. On the other, given individuals have different abilities and skills in most conditions, acknowledging the principle of self-ownership would lead to substantial inequalities in society. For self-ownership is supposed to allow every person to rightfully own herself, her skill, and (once the gap between the principles of self-ownership and ownership *in general* is successfully filled by some libertarian arguments) whatever she gains by virtue of her ability. Thus any distributive system assuring equality, such as taxation, would violate one's self-ownership. Here arises a difficulty for egalitarians: how is it possible to reconcile these two conflicting principles, self-ownership and equality?

2. Christman's Solution to The Problem: Control Rights/Income Rights Distinction

John Christman(1991) tries to solve this problem by illustrating the distinction between two facets of ownership. The concept of ownership in general has been supposed to express an approval of the rights to possess, use, manage, transfer, and gain income from one's property. However, his argument goes, these rights can and should be sorted out into two distinct groups. The first group includes the owner's rights to use, possess, manage, and transfer her property, each of which essentially concerns her interest in *controlling* the asset. By excising these *control rights*, a person is entitled to decide what is to be done with the things she owns as far as it does not affect or harm other people. For example, no one but her is entitled to decide what kind of crops she cultivates in her farm, how much she plans to produce them, and so forth. In short, what control rights allow the owners to enjoy is the *use value* of their property. Importantly, this use value will be generated mainly by the

natures of the property (say, how fertile the soil is) and its owner's ability (how she is skilled in cultivating crops). It has nothing to do with, in principle, whether and how other people evaluate her property, skill, and products. The second group comprises the right to the income that emanates from the asset. 'Income' here is not intended by Christman to mean net products from the property. Instead, it is an increased or extra *benefit* that the owner would gain when she sold or traded her asset or product from it. This *income right* contrasts with control right in the sense that the former is essentially dependent on some 'contractual transaction' between individuals while the latter is not. One cannot sell or trade her holdings without the consent of others even though those consents or contracts are implicit in some cases. Therefore, the rationale behind this distinction between the two components of ownership is that income rights are uniquely connected to the distribution of goods, resources, and information in an economic system while control rights are independent from it (Christman, 1991, pp. 33-4).

A normative implication of the control rights/income rights distinction is this: since they have different natures, the sources of justifications for those two elements of ownership are to be different too. The source of justification for control rights should appeal solely to 'individual interests' such as liberty, autonomy, and self-determination. For the value you can gain by exercising your control rights in possessing, using, or consuming your property totally depends on what preferences you have in doing so. It does not depend on whether or not other people also enjoy their own control rights. In contrast, the value of income rights is contingent on the preferences of other people, not only yours, since how much you can gain by selling your property depends on how much others want to pay for it. Thus, the justificatory argument for income rights should make reference to several factors such as the nature of the environment besides one's property, the existence of market and the pattern of distribution of goods in it, or in short, the actions of others, all of which are beyond the owner's control. It follows from this that the justification of control rights does not entail that of income rights. Therefore, even though egalitarians accept control rights as justified, it does not necessarily contradict with their assuring equality that regulates and limits one's income rights (Christman, 1991, p. 37).

The distinction between control rights and income rights explained above concerns ownerships in general, but Christman contends that it can be applied to the issue of self-ownership and that the distinction is a key to solve the puzzle of self-ownership and equality. Self-ownership as a moral principle is construed as the claim that 'one ought to be left free to do whatever one chooses so long as non-consenting other persons are not thereby harmed' (Arneson, 1991, p. 36). Now, what makes

this principle so intuitively compelling? It is precisely because, Christman argues, the principle of self-ownership reflects some of our most fundamental values such as liberty, autonomy, and self-determination. If someone else forced me to do something against my will, plan, or preference, these fundamental values (self-determination and so on) of mine would be unacceptably denied: this is the feeling behind our strong intuition about the principle of self-ownership. Importantly, then, these fundamental values and interests that rest on the core of self-ownership are not components of income rights but of control rights (Christman, 1991, pp. 39-40). Given the principle of self-ownership, you have a right to decide whether or how you use and dispose of yourself and your skill, which is tantamount to say that you have a control right to yourself and your skill. However, it does not entail that you have an income right: a right to benefit from selling your body parts or exchanging your skills.

3. What Our Intuition Tells Us About Self-Ownership?

Christman does not argue that control rights are indeed justified on the basis of the value of autonomy, self-determinacy and so forth (Christman, 1991, p. 34). What he shows is, instead, the justificatory argument for control rights does not necessarily serve for the justification of income rights. Granting self-ownership (and control rights to one's own body and talents) is thus compatible with assuring equality by introducing the social system that limits income rights (say, taxation). It is still an open question whether or not control rights can be justified based on the fundamental values that also motivate the principle of self-ownership. Moreover, libertarians may go on a detour to find another justificatory argument for income rights. At any rate, it does not concern me here whether or not there could be a decisive argument for or against the principle of self-ownership. In what follows I will instead find some plausible justificatory strategy for our control rights, and then examine what kind of problem is to be found with it.

I start with accepting that we have a strong intuition for self-ownership somehow, which Cohen's eye lottery case seems to show. Also, I assume that such an intuition concerns our basic values including autonomy, liberty and self-determinacy, as Christman suggested. Even so, however, we may not casually say that our intuition about eye lottery will support the principle of self-ownership *in general*. Since it is not always evident how your body is related to your abilities, the self-ownership of body and that of skills should be discussed separately. Cohen's thought experiment apparently concerns one's body part (eyeball), and there would surely be some causal connection between one's body parts and abilities (vision). Given things so are, one might think that

we need to justify control rights to our own body parts first, and then proceed to consider how the control rights to one's body justifies the control rights to her ability. However, I doubt if this is the right way to go. For, what our intuition about Cohen's eye lottery can primarily support is not the self-ownership of body but that of ability.

To make this point clear, consider the following two modified examples of eye lottery. Firstly, suppose that we are going to draw a lot to decide a donor one of whose eyeballs will be given to the blind. Immediately after the transplant surgery, the donor will be given an artificial eyeball that works perfectly for her but not for the natural-born blind since it requires the normal visual nerve in the orbit to which the artificial eyeball is connected. Secondly, suppose that scientists have found a theoretical way to implant an artificial eyeball even in the blind whose visual nerve is not normal. Thus we do not need an eyeball donor anymore. However, to implement this implant technology, scientists need a subject to investigate a specific part of human eyeball whose nature has not been known yet. The investigation can be done in totally noninvasive way: only an X-ray test, or the like, for one eye is required. But regrettably the subject will partly lose her vision because of the side effect of the X-ray investigation. We are going to draw a lot to decide the subject. In the first case, the donor loses her own eyeball but perfectly maintain her visual ability. In the second case, by contrast, the subject keeps her eyeball but only loses part of her visual ability. Now, I believe that the first case will be accepted much more easily than the second case. If so, this difference suggests that our intuition concerning Cohen's original eye lottery example primarily supports the self-ownership of ability rather than that of body parts.

	The Subject Loses...	The Subject Keeps...	Our Intuitive Reaction
Modified Case 1.	Her Own Eyeball	Perfect Vision	It's Acceptable.
Modified Case 2.	Partial Vision	Her Own Eyeball	It's Unacceptable.

A problem with this pair of modified cases might be this: in the first case, the donor is compensated for her loss (by an artificial eyeball) while the subject in the second case is not, which may not be fair enough to show my intended claim above.⁽²⁾ However, this asymmetry in these two cases is only superficial and hence could not undermine my point. It is true that the donor in the first case is compensated by an artificial eyeball. But that compensation is merely for her *extra loss* caused by the loss of her own eyeball; chiefly her vision and normal appearance of her face. In

contrast, (I supposed) the X-ray test in the second case does not cause the subject such an extra loss other than the loss of her partial vision (that is, the partial loss of her vision does not cause, say, physical damage on her eyeball). The subject here is not compensated precisely because, unlike the donor in the first case, she does not incur any extra loss to be compensated for. In short, compensation for the eyeball donor in the first case does not make unfair the pair of my modified cases. On the contrary, that is needed for the cases to be fairly comparable.

One may still insist that the arguments above do not deny that we have intuitive aversion, at least to some extent, to the first case even though it is weaker than in the second case and Cohen's original case. Suppose, for example, that someone else burned your house down and gave you another equal one without your consent. Even though you are sheltered and living as comfortable as before, you may feel something wrong has happened. Similarly, if someone takes your vital organ without your consent and gives you an equally good artificial one, you might feel it is unacceptable even though you do not incur any physical loss or damage as a result of the exchange. Thus, the friend of self-ownership will not be persuaded by my argument that our intuitions in favor of self-ownership are really intuitions about maintaining abilities.⁽³⁾

It is true that the subject in the first case loses her own eyeball, so she may think it is unacceptable even though she will be given an artificial eyeball that perfectly works for her. I do not intend to convince them that we have no such an intuition that primarily supports for the self-ownership of one's own body. But here is another thought experiment presented by Cohen, which this time would work against the self-ownership over one's own body (Cohen, 1995, pp. 243-4). Suppose that we humans do not have eyeballs but only visual nerves in orbits when we are born. Immediately after the birth, a baby gets two artificial eyeballs on loan from the state, and they are connected to her own visual nerves. As we grow up, the artificial eyeballs will grow up to fit adults' orbits. Now, suppose that someone lost her eyeballs by some unfortunate accident. Since the artificial eyeballs that the state has are suitable exclusively for newborn babies, the only way to give her a visual ability is to transplant a grown-up artificial eyeball to her from another person. We decide the eye donor by lot. We may feel intuitive aversion to this case as well. This intuition will be explained in two ways. First, we cannot accept this eye lottery because the donor loses her visual ability. Second, we cannot accept this lottery since the donor loses her eyeball that had been with her for long time. However, as to the second explanation, the donor's eyeball is *not* her own eyeball but the state's property. It follows from this that one would feel intuitive aversion when someone takes something from her, *whether or not she has legitimate ownership of it*. Hence, even if the donor in

the first modified case would feel it be unacceptable to lose her eyeball, it does not imply that her feeling reflects the ownership of her body parts. Kashiwaba(2005) also nicely describes the upshot of this ‘loaned eyeball lottery’ case: we normally feel some ‘emotional attachment’ to our own body parts and thus feel considerably harmed when they are taken away even we keep our abilities related to those body parts. However, as the ‘loaned eyeball lottery’ case suggests, such an emotional attachment is not essential to the things of which one has legitimate ownership. A person can feel strong emotional attachment to things that are not hers. Therefore, it is doubtful that our intuition about the first case (the donor loses her own eyeball but keep visual ability) would support our approval of the principle of self-ownership of body parts. All in all, what our intuitive aversions to these eye lottery cases suggest is, essentially, our approval of self-ownership of ability. Of course, there might possibly be another thought experiment that would successfully suggest our moral intuition in favor of the self-ownership of body. However, the point is that the more plausible and less arguable strategy for justifying the principle of self-ownership is to deal with ability first and then, if possible, proceed to the case for body.

4. Justifying Control Rights to Ability

Given that our intuition primarily supports the principle of self-ownership of one’s ability, and that our approval of self-ownership rests on our interests in fundamental values such as autonomy, liberty, and self-determinacy, let us then consider whether or not, or how, we can justify control rights to one’s own ability and skill on the basis of those fundamental values. First of all, we need to illuminate what kinds of ability are to be under discussion here. There are numerous kinds of abilities and skills: visual ability, auditory capability, skills in hunting, fishing, mining, farming, manufacturing, engineering, teaching, financing, and in addition, various artistic abilities. Although there will be many ways to sort these abilities out, the following three basic groups should at least be considered insofar as the principle of self-ownership and control rights are concerned.

- (1) Abilities for sustaining one’s most basic health and minimum subsistence.
- (2) Abilities for improving one’s own standard of living above the minimum level.
- (3) Artistic abilities or skills for hobbies and recreational activities.

Given the fundamental values such as autonomy, liberty, and self-determinacy, it seems that the control rights to these abilities can be justified: nobody but me seems to possess the right to dispose

of these abilities. Speaking of artistic abilities, suppose that you have a great musical talent. You alone are entitled to decide whether or not you use the talent. If somebody but you can rightly direct you, without your consent, to play music for the sake of other people's pleasure, you cannot be autonomous. Likewise, even if you are so skilled in farming that you can produce crops much enough to feed other poor people, nobody can force you to do so without violating your autonomy and independence. Of course, you are doing something good and hence deserve to be honored if you are willingly using your talent to help other people. Nonetheless, because your self-determinacy is a fundamental value, you can rightly decide *not* to use such ability. In this way, it seems that the control rights to one's ability can be justifiable based on the values like autonomy and so on, insofar as the abilities sorted in the groups (2) and (3) are concerned.

However, I do not think that the same argument can be applied to the abilities in the first group. The fundamental value of autonomy will, arguably, justify one's rights to *use* her abilities and skills for sustaining her most basic life and maintaining her minimal standard of living. But does it also justify her rights *not* to use those abilities? There are strong doubts if one could be truly autonomous and continuously hold self-determinacy without maintaining her minimal health and standard of living. An extreme case, such as suicide, will make my point clear. Suppose that someone decided not to feed herself until she will be dead because she wants to die and thinks fasting is the most painless way for that purpose. At first glance, the values of autonomy and self-determinacy seem to justify her decision: she seems to have a right to do so and thus nobody can rightly prevent her from committing such a suicidal fasting. However, when the fasting gradually has debilitated her physically and mentally to the extent that she lost her sound ability of reflection, can it be said that she is still autonomous? She might have changed her mind in the course of the debilitating fasting when she found a fact that eliminated her worry and realized she did not need to die anymore. But if her physical and emotional wreck had become so severe that she lost her sound ability of reflection and thus was not able to change her mind even when she found a beacon of hope, she cannot be said as autonomous at that moment. Therefore, as far as our most basic abilities are concerned, justifying control rights to those abilities in full scale on the basis of the values of autonomy (self-determinacy, so on) will lead to a contradictory result: it may deny the autonomy of the same person.

What my argument above essentially suggests is that control rights to one's ability cannot be justified *in full scale* if the justification is based on our fundamental values such as autonomy and self-determinacy. Those fundamental values cannot be unconditionally accepted. Your autonomy and self-determinacy, among other values, can be meaningful only when you have sound ability of

reflection. It follows from this that control rights to our most basic abilities comprise the rights of utilizing, preserving, and developing them *but do not include the rights of renouncing, relinquishing or disposing of them.*⁽⁴⁾

There would be objections to my argument above. Let us examine some of them. Firstly, one may insist that we can be considered as autonomous without sound ability of reflection. For, even if you got dead drunk and thus lost your normal ability of reflection, your bad deeds should not be forgiven based on your drunkenness. Thus, the objection goes, the person who committed suicidal fasting should be considered as continuously autonomous. If it is true, however, we will be led to a difficulty. How about infants and dementia patients, should we consider them as autonomous in full scale? Should we accept their application for organ donations? I believe that we have a strong intuition that it is not permissible. Secondly, it may be claimed that there is a significant difference between the drunk and the person who commits suicidal fasting on the one hand, and infants and dementia patients on the other. As to the former, they themselves intentionally caused the conditions where they lose their sound ability of reflection while in the latter case the infants and dementia patients are not responsible for the lack of their ability. Although this objection looks persuasive at first glance, it is totally beside the point. Moral responsibility for one's deeds will depend on whether or not the lack of her sound ability of reflection is caused by her own decision. But it does not imply that the person was autonomous at the moment of drunkenness. On the contrary, the difference between the drunk and the dementia patients supports my point. If you have an ability to refrain from drinking and foresee you are very likely to do something bad due to drunkenness, you are not allowed to relinquish your ability to stop drinking. Likewise, if your disposal of your basic ability is very likely to undermine your autonomy, your control rights of doing so cannot be justified.

Still, another more essential objection will be raised: in the case I talked about, the person who decided to commit suicidal fasting must go through a stage of not being a 'rational' agent for a while before she dies. But, the objection goes, it is not always so.⁽⁵⁾ For example, she could shoot herself, where there would be no stage of her being non-rational agent prior to death. It is true that there are various ways to terminate one's life, including those can be so quickly done that one does not need go through a stage where she would lose her sound reflection. Put in a different manner: we have been so far discussing whether or not the fundamental values could justify one's rights *not to use* her abilities for sustaining her most basic life. Terminating one's own life by disposing of those abilities is more or less *voluntary euthanasia*. However, we may reasonably assume the ability to shoot one's head or the like. As to such abilities, control rights to *use* them are in fact to be discussed in terms of

their justifiability on the basis of the fundamental values. Then, since killing yourself by shooting does not let you go through a stage of not being rational before you die, my argument above cannot prevent the control right to kill oneself from being justified based on the fundamental values.

Take the discussion by Doerflinger(1989) as a starting point to construct a counterargument against this objection. He sees autonomy as a prudential value (i.e., something that could make our life better) and explains the problem with suicide: choosing to terminate one's own life eliminates all the other important choices that she could make.⁽⁶⁾ Given that her choice to commit suicide is her autonomous decision, one would claim, it should be respected. However, if she did not make that decision, she would make other numerous autonomous choices in future that should equally be respected. Therefore, one cannot consistently defend a choice to kill oneself. He makes this point clear by appealing to a parallel argument that a right to freedom does not entail a right to sell oneself into permanent slavery even of her own volition. If you assume that freedom is a fundamental value, and that you will enjoy considerably less freedom under slavery than your current situation, then you 'must limit particular choices to safeguard freedom itself' (Doerflinger, 1989, pp. 16-7). Now, compare the situations of a slave and that of a corpse. Even a slave has at least some freedom in the sense that she is free to choose her attitudes toward her hardship while a corpse has no choices at all. It follows from this, if you hold that voluntary slavery cannot be justified based on freedom, analogically, justifying suicide based on the value of autonomy would be much more contradictory.

Sjöstrand, Helgesson, Eriksson, & Juth(2011) criticizes Doerflinger, saying his argument rests on a problematic assumption. They contend that it is absurd to assume that 'we can compare the freedom of a corpse with that of living person' because 'corpses are neither free nor unfree, the predicate 'free' cannot be accurately applied to a corpse.' So, their argument goes, Doerflinger's analogy does not work well. This objection could sound persuasive especially when they point out that someone is not necessarily better off merely because she makes, or is able to make, more choices. In the case like a person is already in the final stages of death full of pain and reasonably foresees no opportunities to make important choices in the rest of her life, Doerflinger's argument would lose its force.

Here is my twofold reply to this objection, which aims to defend the thesis that justifying a right to suicide on the basis of autonomy leads to a contradiction. First, it is not so problematic to assume comparability of a value for living people and that for corpses. Yes, it may be true that a corpse is neither free nor unfree, but what we actually evaluate is possible situations or outcomes that will be resulted from our decision. Someone may quit smoking despite the pleasure it gives to him,

comparing his possible future situations in one of which he dies young due to his smoking habit and hence loses all other kinds of pleasure he could enjoy in other situations where he quitted smoking and thus is still alive. There is nothing absurd here. A corpse, admittedly, does not feel any pleasure. But, if someone rigidly argues that the predicate 'feel pleasure' is not applicable to a corpse, then she would undermine all kinds of decision calculus involving some possible outcomes in which the agent would be dead. Second, in terms of the cases like dying person's decision, I feel inclined to accept that her choice to kill herself may outweigh mere possibility of her making other choices in the rest of her life. Even so, however, there still remains worry as to how one could reasonably confirm that a dying patient will have no further chance to make some important decisions when she decided to survive the rest of her life. And, I believe, this is the very reason why suicide and voluntary euthanasia are in fact contentious in practice.

Conclusion

As we saw in section 2, Christman's distinction between control rights and income rights shows that libertarians need to provide justifications for control rights and for income rights separately. If my arguments in section 3 have some truth, our intuitions are not strong enough to support the principle of self-ownership in general. It is suggested that what our intuition can primarily support is not the self-ownership of body but that of ability. Thus, I proceeded in section 4 to find a plausible justificatory strategy for control rights to ability on the basis of our fundamental values such as autonomy, and then pinpointed the crucial problem that such an attempt of justification must face. Control rights to one's ability, it has been argued, cannot be fully thus justified in the sense that one may not rightfully commit suicide or comparable self-destructive behavior.

Some comments on further prospects: first, since there are so many different abilities, my proposal for justifying control rights to abilities is a bit hard to assess unless it provides some principled way of determining what the crucial abilities are. An issue we would need to address is related to the fact that whether or not an ability is crucial to one's basic needs could depend on her environment or surroundings. A skill in fishing, say, is of use to me mainly for recreational purpose while it can be an indispensable skill for someone who lives in the area where fish is the only source for nutrition for her. Second, I have not denied that we have some intuitions for the ownership of our own body. I only claim that Cohen's eye lottery case or the like does not provide strong evidence for such intuitions. I even have a proposal of an alternative strategy for justifying control rights to one's body parts. Nobody would deny that we have a strong intuition in favor of the self-ownership of

one's *whole body*. Consider a primitive society where they hold a human sacrifice ritual every year. They decide the sacrifice of the year by a drawing, and the person who was chosen will be killed for the sake of the society's prosperity. It is hard not to feel intuitive aversion to this case. Therefore, this intuition can be another starting point for justifying control rights to one's body parts. Then, we need to confirm the statement: *if I have control rights to my whole body, then I have control rights to its parts too*. I think the gap between one's whole body and body parts can be bridged by appealing to a causal connection between them. It seems plausible to say that each parts of one's body had been produced by numerous organic activities in her whole body. Even one cell in my finger cannot have been produced without blood circulation, digestion and so on. In this sense, one of the causes of my body parts is my whole body.

Notes

- (1) Needless to say, whether or not suicide is considered to be one's rightful act could be a problem among the libertarians and their friends. Even when they agree with each other in assuming that someone else cannot interfere with one's choice between staying alive and quitting her life, their claims are not monotonous. For example, Szasz insists that 'agents of the State ought to be prohibited from forcibly preventing suicide,' but at the same time he does not mean that 'we have a right to suicide' (Szasz, 1999, p. 130).
- (2) I am grateful to Chris Richards and Tim Laughlin for making me notice this potential problem.
- (3) David Sobel and others told me about this worry. I thank to them for having me develop the argument further.
- (4) Masaya Honda conveyed to me his worry that my argument would discourage us from going on a hunger strike, which is widely seen as effective and dignified deed to protest against political oppressions. My reply would be simple and practical: if we assume that autonomy is a fundamental value, and the hunger strike is really intended to expose yourself to the danger of death, then it is not morally permissible. A hunger strike should be well organized in order to avoid the risk of protester's severe debility. It preferably needs some medical staffs and supporters.
- (5) This objection too is made by David Sobel. He also suggested me the following further objection in his comments on the earlier draft of my paper: what is to be ensured is not one's being continuously autonomous but rather her being permitted to do what she autonomously chooses. In that case, the objection goes, we should not prevent someone from committing suicide since it is what she autonomously chose and she should be permitted to do that. I think this objection could work, but only when one could successfully argue that any choice, once autonomously made, should get such strong priority over every possible autonomous decision that would be made in future.
- (6) The focus of Doerflinger's (and Sjöstrand's as well) discussion is on physician assisted suicide. Nonetheless, the point remains.

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